

# NORTHERN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

[www.northernarchitecturalhistory.org.uk](http://www.northernarchitecturalhistory.org.uk)

## WALKING TOUR OF NORTH SHIELDS

Based at the Old Low Light and Fish Quay, with walking tours of the Low Town and Heritage Action Zone in central North Shields

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022**



**Old Low Light**



**Stephenson's Northumberland Arms**



**Dobson's St Columba's Church**

North Shields was first established when Tynemouth's Prior Germanus set up a small fishing community early in the 13thC. Its sheltered harbour, close to sea routes, often excited the jealousy of, and destruction by, Newcastle as it tried to maintain its monopoly of river trade. Yet North Shields developed into a thriving port along a narrow strip between the river and cliffs, or banks, behind. By the late 18thC increasing trade and population growth led to the building of a new town on top of the banks with spacious streets and squares in a marked contrast to the crowded Low Town.

The morning will be spent inside the Old Low Light Heritage Centre, run by a local Charity, and outside on Walk 1. The Old Low Light was built in 1672, as one of a pair of navigation lights at the mouth of the river, inside and at the same time as Clifford's Fort was built to protect the Tyne from Dutch aggression. Early 18thC brick and early 19thC stone defences are still standing with the Fort. A range of 19thC and early 20thC fishing related buildings are still standing in the area, including the adjacent New Low Light which replaced the Old Low Light in 1811.

Walk 2 takes us along to the Western Quay to view the current fishing fleet, before continuing along to the Duke of Northumberland's early 19thC deep water development of the New Quay. Here, the Duke's architect, David Stephenson built the Northumberland Arms with its six giant unfluted Ionic columns on a rusticated base. Next to it stands Benjamin Green's Sailors' Home building (1854/56) and other 19thC buildings. Close by the current developer Urban Splash is progressing with the regeneration of the Old Smiths Docks.

Walk 3 starts outside the 1806 Tynemouth Lit & Phil Society building, now the Registry Office, before proceeding to the Howard/ Saville Street junction with John Johnston's 1858 Mechanic's Institute, later the Free Library, John Dobson's 1844/45 Town Hall and other 18thC buildings. We then pass Dobson's 1811 Scottish Presbyterian Church, 1857 Wesleyan Chapel and 1846 Baptist Church walking up Howard Street to Northumberland Square to see his Italianate St Columba's Church. Along the north side is a row of early 19thC Georgian houses facing the recently restored central gardens. The walk concludes by walking through to Christ Church, originally built in 1668 but extensively remodelled and raised in 1792, with its apse being added in 1869.

## ITINERARY

- 10:00 – 10:30 **Arrive** at the Old Low Light Heritage Centre, Clifford's Fort, North Shields Fish Quay, NE30 1JE, for tea/coffee/orange juice & biscuits on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor (which has been hired for the exclusive use by NAHS between 10.00 - 14.00).  
Free parking is available in the Low Light Car Park adjacent to Clifford's Fort and the nearest Metro station is Tynemouth (maps will be provided before the walk)
- 10:30 **Welcome** and introduction to the day's tours and walks.
- 10:45 – 12:15 Attendees will be split into **two groups**, each undertaking **both** of the following tours:  
**Old Low light Heritage Centre Tour:** Starting with an overview of the Old Low Light area from the Viewing Platform, look at a giant copy of the 1827 Rooks Map of North Shields and Tynemouth before looking at the "Folk Who Shaped Shields" and Norah Balls exhibitions, permanent displays and the map drawers in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor Heritage Gallery.  
**Walk 1:** Around the outside of the Old & New Low Light buildings, Clifford's Fort and 19thC & early 20thC buildings around the Fish Quay.
- 12:15 – 13:30 **Sandwich lunch** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Old Low Light Heritage Centre.
- 13:30 – 14:30 **Walk 2 - North Shields Low Town** includes a view of North Shields fishing boats from the Western Quay before proceeding to the New Quay to view buildings by David Stephenson and Benjamin Green and the results of Urban Splash's redevelopment the old Smiths Docks. We will then return along the Low Road and up to the 1806 Tynemouth Lit & Phil Society Building, now the Registry Office, for the start of Walk 3.  
**Distance: approx. 1.3 miles and includes a section of very steep slopes/ steps.**  
Those who might find Tour 2 too difficult or taxing can remain at the Old Low Light and stroll around to look at the Black Middens before driving up to park in Central North Shields to join the start of Tour 3. (maps showing location of low cost and free parking, plus details of potential carpooling will be provided before the walk).
- 14:30 – 15:45 **Walk 3 - Central North Shields Heritage Zone:** Starting outside the 1806 Tynemouth Lit & Phil Society Building, now Registry Office, we will walk up Howard Street to look at John Dobson's Town Hall, John Johnson's old Library Building and other 18thC buildings at the junction with Saville Street, before continuing up Howard Street passing a number of John Dobson churches before entering Northumberland Square with its row of Georgian houses. We will then leave the Square to continue onto and finish at Christ Church on Albion Road.  
**Distance: approx. 0.5 mile, including a walk up a gentling slope**
- 15:45 At the conclusion of Walk 3 attendees are free to return to their cars in central North Shields, catch public transport home or return to their cars in the Low light area with Stuart and Sandra Barlow past other historic buildings and areas.

**Cost: £15.00 which includes free entry into the Old Low Light Heritage Centre (normally £4.00) which is run by a charity, free coffee/tea/juice (from 10:00 to 14.00) and sandwich lunch.**

***N.B: the visit will involve walking outdoors so please wear sensible shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather on the day.***

It is hoped access will be available to view inside John Dobson's St. Columba's Church and Christ Church but at the time of writing this cannot be guaranteed.

## NAHS Walking Tour of North Shields Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022 – Booking Form

Please return this form to: Chris Downs, 8 Holmside Place, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5AJ  
E-mail: [chris-downs@outlook.com](mailto:chris-downs@outlook.com) Tel: (0191) 2760060

***Book early to avoid disappointment and by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at the very latest.***

Name/s.....

I/We would like to come on the tour and enclose a cheque (payable to NAHS) for £.....

OR: I/We will pay £..... by electronic transfer

NAHS Bank details: Barclays Bank PLC Sort Code: 20-59-59 Account No: 70694274

All bookings received will be acknowledged. ***If you do not receive an acknowledgement your booking has not been registered.***

Address.....

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Contact E-mail..... PhoneNo.....

I/We have understood that the Walk 2 involves some exertion walking up very steep inclined streets and that I/We are responsible for ensuring I/We have suitable footwear together with clothing/protection appropriate to outdoor activity in the forecast weather conditions. (please tick.....)

I/We have decided that due to the steepness of part of Walk 2 I/we will initially remain at the Old Low Light Heritage Centre after lunch before taking our car up to central North Shields joining the start of Walk 3 at 14.30 (please tick ....) OR we will require a lift up to that start of Walk 3 (please tick .....

Person(s) to contact in the event of accident or illness on the tour:

Address.....

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Contact E-mail..... Phone No.....

Any pre-existing medical conditions of which emergency services may need to be informed in the event of accident or illness (This information will be retained by the organiser for the purposes of this tour only and will be divulged to medical personnel only in the event of an incident occurring):

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I/We note that refreshments and a sandwich lunch are included and have the following special dietary requirements:

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